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22 September 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: DDI

SUBJECT : Controlling Inaccurate Statements about the Situation in the Soviet Bloc

1. Reference is made to your memorandum dated 22 August 1955, subject as above, on which you have requested our views and suggestions.

2. In connection with the possible types of solutions suggested in paragraph 2 of reference memorandum, I would make the following comments:

a. If the DCI or the White House were to furnish the Congress with an unclassified version of Soviet military strength, economic conditions, and other relevant data, there is some question in my mind as to its usefulness or timeliness because of its unclassified nature. In addition, once such an unclassified statement were offered to the Congress, there would be a certain number of Congressmen of varying degrees of influence who would wish to refute or argue with portions of it because of personal conclusions which they had reached based on their travels or other information. This means that the document submitted would immediately become a controversial one. If such a document were submitted, it should certainly not be submitted by this Agency, as we doubtless would promptly become embroiled in controversy on details such as those raised by Congressman Feighan following the publication of the Director's article in Parade Magazine on 3 July 1955.

b. I would consider it inadvisable to have the DCI brief a joint session of several Congressional committees on the Soviet picture. While CIA provides the facts to the policy makers of the Government, it is up to the latter to determine which of several policies they might follow on the basis of these facts. If all these facts were made available to various committees of Congress, many of the individual members would start quarrelling with the policy of the Executive Branch in particular situations, when the members felt that other policies more in keeping with their individual predilections should have been followed. While this type of argument goes on at the present time, most Congressmen do not have intelligence briefing material as a basis for their arguments. Furthermore, in as wide a briefing as would be involved here, it is questionable whether the DCI could brief on an all-source basis including Atomic Energy information. I believe that a partial briefing is probably worse than none at all. Most Congressional briefings on Soviet matters include some policy views and should be given by the appropriate departments to the appropriate committees, rather than by the DCI.

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c. As a general rule, those officials most likely to make public statements on capabilities of the Soviet Union are already represented on the IAC and would presumably get the pertinent facts from their intelligence officers. In Executive session, it would appear to me that no matter how much guidance such officials receive from CIA or the intelligence community, the frailties of human nature will always crop up, particularly in connection with appropriations.

d. The suggestion that the President would direct the members of the Executive Branch to clear certain statements on Soviet capabilities with CIA might have considerable appeal in order to accomplish the desired ends. However, this would place the Agency in a quasi-censorship position which would appear to be politically inadvisable. It is one thing if such officials occasionally ask us for guidance; it is another thing if it is mandatory.

3. It is agreed that it would be highly desirable to eliminate the many inaccurate statements which are made regarding the USSR and the Bloc. The problem has two facets - The Executive and the Congressional. I feel that it would be appropriate for the President to try to eliminate inaccurate or contradictory public statements on Soviet capabilities from the Executive Branch pronouncements, but I do not believe that the DCI should be the monitor for the various reasons indicated above. I think such statements should be cleared through the White House itself, utilizing either the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Special Assistant to the President (Psychological Warfare), or such other member of the President's office as the President would designate. Such an official could, of course, consult the Director informally on any controversial point. While a general manual for guidance could be prepared, I do not believe that an unclassified document of this type would be worth preparing for this purpose.

4. In so far as the Congress is concerned, any special manual or briefing which was given them would become the subject of so much controversy and interpretation as to render it almost useless. As a concrete example, let us say that such a briefing had been prepared but had not included the details on new Soviet aircraft which became available this Spring. The Congress would then say that there had been an intelligence failure in not knowing about these aircraft. If in defense CIA then stated that we had some information about the aircraft, but it had been too highly classified to be revealed, we would have been in the middle of another controversy. It would appear preferable to continue to have appropriate policy officials, such as the Secretaries of State and Defense,

continue to brief the Congress on Soviet matters in connection with legislation, appropriations, etc., as at present. Human nature being what it is, I do not believe that their statements can be controlled either through DCI briefing of Congress or release of a White House statement. The most that could be hoped for would be to bring the Executive Branch into line through White House clearance of statements, so that their authoritative statements may serve as the best guide to the general public.

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